CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A system that mitigates viewing offensive message content comprising:

a message receiving component that receives at least one incoming message for delivery to a user;

a filtering component that calculates a junk score for the message; and

a content blocking component that blocks at least a portion of message content from appearing in at least a preview pane when the junk score exceeds a first threshold.

2.   The system of claim 1, further comprising a classification component that classifies the message as any one of good, junk, and a middle state for messages determined to be safe for an inbox but not safe for viewing or previewing the message based in part on the junk score.

3.   The system of claim 2, the message is classified at least in the middle state when the junk score exceeds at least the first threshold.

4.   The system of claim 1, further comprising an analysis component that determines whether the junk score exceeds the first threshold.

5.   The system of claim 1, further comprising an unblocking component that receives user input to unblock blocked message content.

6.   The system of claim 5, the unblocking component operates per message.

7.   The system of claim 1, the content blocking component operates per message or globally for substantially all messages.

8.   The system of claim 1, the content comprises text, links, sounds, video, attachments, embedded content, applets, speech, and images.

9.   The system of claim 1, the first threshold determined in part by user preferences.

10.   The system of claim 1, the content blocking component blocks at least a portion of the message content by performing at least one of the following:

      hiding at least a portion of the content of the message;

      hiding at least a portion of a subject line of the message;

      hiding content in a from line of the message;

      blurring at least a portion of the subject line of the message;

      blurring content in the from line of the message; and

      blurring at least a portion of the content of the message.

11.   The system of claim 1, the content blocking component replaces blocked content with at least one of text, graphics, video, and/or audio notice that warns users that potentially offensive content has been blocked from view.

12.   The system of claim 1, further comprising a challenge-response component that requests message senders to correctly respond to at least one challenge per message received when the junk score of that message exceeds a second threshold before delivery of the message is permitted.

13.   The system of claim 12, the second threshold is any one of higher or lower than the first threshold.

14.   The system of claim 12, the second threshold is about equal to the first threshold.

15.   The system of claim 12, the second threshold is determined at least in part by user preferences.

16.   The system of claim 12, the message associated with the challenged sender is hidden from view in a user's inbox until the challenge is correctly solved.

17.   The system of claim 12, content of the message is blocked when the message is released to the user's inbox following a correctly solved challenge since the message's junk score exceeds the first threshold.

18.   The system of claim 1, further comprising a rating component that rates incoming messages as unscanned before they are subjected to the filtering component.

19.   The system of claim 18, unscanned messages are hidden from view and are not visible in a user's inbox while additional data about the message is collected or while the message is being filtered by the filtering component.

20.   The system of claim 18, unscanned messages are made visible in a user's inbox when the filtering component is turned off.

21.   A computer readable medium having stored thereon the system of claim 1.

22.   A method that mitigates viewing offensive message content comprising:
        receiving at least one incoming message;
        computing a junk score for the at least one message; and
        blocking at least a portion of message content from appearing in at least a preview pane when the junk score exceeds a blocking threshold.

23.   The method of claim 22, further comprising classifying the message based in part on a computed junk score.

24.   The method of claim 22, further comprising classifying the message as unscanned before computing the junk score.

25.   The method of claim 24, further comprising updating the message from unscanned to some other rating based in part on its computed junk score.

26.   The method of claim 22, the content comprising at least one of text, images, sounds, audio, video, applets, embedded text, embedded images, URLs, and speech.

27.   The method of claim 22, further comprising unblocking blocked content when explicit user input to unblock the content is received.

28.   The method of claim 22, blocking the message content applies to substantially all messages globally when feature is activated.

29.   The method of claim 22, further comprising requiring a password to open messages in which content has been blocked.

30.   The method of claim 22, further comprising challenging a sender of the message before revealing any blocked content of the message.

31.   The method of claim 22, further comprising challenging a sender of the message before allowing delivery of the message when the junk score of the message exceeds a challenge threshold.

32.   The method of claim 31, the challenge threshold is any one of higher or lower than the blocking threshold.

33.   The method of claim 31, the challenge threshold is about equal to the blocking threshold.

34.   A system that mitigates viewing offensive message content comprising:

means for receiving at least one incoming message;

means for computing a junk score for the at least one message; and

means for blocking at least a portion of message content from appearing in at least a preview pane when the junk score exceeds a blocking threshold.

35.   The system of claim 33, further comprising means for challenging a sender of the message before allowing delivery of the message when the junk score of the message exceeds a challenge threshold.

36.   The system of claim 35, the challenge threshold is any one of higher or lower than the blocking threshold.

37.   The system of claim 35, the challenge threshold is about equal to the blocking threshold.

38.   The system of claim 33, further comprising means for unblocking blocked content when explicit user input to unblock the content is received.

39.   The system of claim 33, further comprising means for classifying the message as unscanned before computing the junk score.

40.   A data packet adapted to be transmitted between two or more computer processes that mitigates viewing offensive message content, the data packet comprising: information associated with receiving at least one incoming message; computing a junk score for the at least one message; and blocking at least a portion of message content from appearing in at least a preview pane when the junk score exceeds a blocking threshold.